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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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For paragraphs under the word "Ans." the editor is personally responsible.

April, 1892.

QUESTION CLXVII.

What is meant in the Proem of Secret Doctrine (Vol. I, page 14,) by the term "bare subjectivity" as contrasted with "Unconditioned Consciousness", for the latter would seem to be "bare subjectivity" itself? It is entirely comprehensible how the Absolute "Be-ness" may be symbolised, on the one hand, by abstract Space, and, on the other, by abstract Motion, but not so readily perceived how Space may be defined as "bare subjectivity" when Motion is contrasted with it as the pure noumenon of Thought.

Ans.—One is perhaps hardly bound to furnish meaning to the phrases of metaphysicians. There is a kind of "sound", with or without "fury", "signifying nothing". Possibly the terms "abstract space" and "abstract motion" may be such. Space is not an entity, but a void, a mere negation of limit or content. It can hardly be more "abstract" in thought than it is in fact. Motion implies something that moves, and when carried into supersensual regions becomes figurative, as the "movement of thought". Can anybody conceive of abstract

Motion, any more than of abstract color? There may, of course, be some profound distinction between "bare subjectivity" and "Unconditioned Consciousness", but the case *looks* like that kind of verbal difference whereof "tweedledum and tweedledee" is a familiar illustration.

W. Q. J.—In the *proem* cited the author distinctly says under (*a*) that "speculation is impossible" about the omnipresent Principle, and then to give one way of symbolizing it—which is certainly not definition—proceeds to state that that Infinite Principle is the same as the "unconscious" and "unknowable" of European philosophy, in which, indeed, the FORUM editor takes delight. She then says it is symbolized in the *Secret Doctrine* as absolute abstract space, which one must conceive of as *space* distinct from all things existing therein; we cannot exclude this, nor at the same time really conceive of it. And in the same way, when we come to regard this omnipresent Principle from the point of view of the root of consciousness, we postulate it as being—in this aspect—*absolute abstract motion*, because consciousness has the quality of motion in it and not the quality of space, since motion has to have space in which to move. So then, having thus vaguely symbolized space, which is not consciousness, we have to say that, on the other hand, considering it as apart from consciousness, it may be said to be "bare subjectivity", although we have to use our consciousness in order to deal with it at all. The editor's question, "Can any one conceive of abstract color?", seems peculiar, since it is not foreign to all the schools of Western thought, where many assert —as, indeed, it would appear they must—that apart from any particular motion or color we can conceive of motion and color in the abstract apart from particularization.

QUESTION CLXVIII.

Can the "Forum" give a list and description of the six and ten Paramitas referred to in the "Voice of the Silence"? Are they the same as the six and ten vows of the Buddhists?

J. K.—It is not precisely clear what is meant by "vows of the Buddhists". The Paramitas are stages of attainment upon

the Path. They are mental stages or acquirements. Paramita is a Thibetan word. It is said to mean "the Buddhas", and refers to the "transcendental virtues" of Buddhism. I am told the word is to be found in Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Thibet.* These six perfections (for priests there are ten) are given in the *Voice of the Silence*, Page 47. (1) Dâna; charity and love immortal. (2) Shîla; harmony in word and act. (3) Kshanti; patience. (4) Virag; indifference to pain or pleasure. (5) Virya; energy that fights its way to Truth, (6) Dhyana; contemplation. This last is defined in H. P. B 's Glossary as "a state of abstraction which carries the ascetic practising it far above this plane of sensuous perception and out of the world of matter". Dhyana has six stages which "differ only in the degrees of abstraction of the personal Ego from sensuous life". Only the context in *Voice of the Silence* (page 45) seems to show that these "golden keys" are the Paramitas, but the 1, 2, 3, and 6 are given in the *Glossary* as "one of the six Paramitas", which settles the point. A seventh is Prajna (or Pragna), defined by the *Glossary* as "a synomyn of Mahât, the Universal Mind. The capacity for perception. Consciousness." An eighth seems to be Bodhi (*Voice*, page 45) or "receptive intelligence in contradistinction to Buddhi, which is the *potentiality* of intelligence". The ninth and tenth Paramitas do not appear to be given out, but by analogy would appear to be still higher stages of development.

QUESTION CLXIX.

If Theosophy is not a proselyting system, why do we Theosophists have efforts at propaganda, tracts, lectures, and the like? It seems inconsistent to say that we don't proselyte, while we strain every muscle to make proselytes.

Ans.—The last clause is hardly correct. There may be mistaking or indiscreet Theosophists who use influence or argument or persuasion to induce outsiders to accept new doctrines, but this is not the course of either the organic body or of its better-taught members. The latter proceed upon a very different theory.

That theory is, as has been explained in various writings, that the possibility of becoming a Theosophist depends upon the degree of evolutionary readiness reached, and that the actuality usually depends upon the advent, at the right moment, of some truth for which the mind has been Karmically prepared. That is to say, a man has slowly been working up to a point where Theosophy, and nothing else, meets his needs; Theosophists see to it that at that point he finds Theosophy. They do not urge it upon anybody; for upon the hostile or the unprepared urging is fruitless, upon the prepared it is unnecessary. Yet as the prepared cannot encounter it unless it is present, Theosophists make it present. The tracts and the lectures are simply to ensure that every man who is ready for Theosophy shall find Theosophy ready for him.

Those who have carefully inspected the Wisdom-Religion are convinced that it, and only it, states the actual facts about Man and his destiny, and impresses upon him the principles which alone can save from personal and social disaster and bring about freedom from evil and pain. They find abundant evidence that in these immemorial teachings are the one cure to human trouble and the one guide to human progress. Hence the immediate impulse is to bring that cure and that guide within the ken of all. But neither will commend itself to a mind which does not recognize the evil, or which prefers some other remedy, or which has a different conception of progress, or which suspects this guide illusory. Each of these mental conditions means a preparatory experience—in regard to Theosophy—as yet incomplete; the soil is not yet fit, and one can no more implant Theosophy therein than one can grow cotton on a rocky slope. Why attempt it? The attempt must fail, and, besides the waste of time and effort, there is almost certain to be excited an irritation which will still further postpone the hopeful hour.

But, as was said, there are others, many others, most particularly at this era, who are ready. They only need to hear the doctrine in order to respond to it. It meets difficulties long felt, yearnings long unsatisfied, wants long perceived. They welcome it, enshrine it in their hearts, live it. Those who have

already thus experienced know precisely what inspiration it has brought to them, and both from principle and from sympathy are eager that no one thus ready shall fail to have such a boon within reach. Therefore it is that they have organized a propaganda, and daily strive that the press and the mails shall so infuse the truth throughout the land that not a prepared soul shall longer wait.

There is, too, another consideration. Ignorance is the parent of most evil, and only knowledge can end it. Hence Theosophists wish to spread knowledge everywhere, thus beginning the process which shall regenerate the world.

Would that it was true that "we strain every muscle" to effect these two ends! If every Theosophist sensed the obligation to do his utmost thereto, felt it his greatest privilege to speed on the propaganda as thus explained, what incalculable results would show themselves in the six years still left us of the cycle! Not vainly would the Headquarters call for the funds without which it is helpless, but from each F. T. S. would come such aid as his power allows. Letters of inquiry, responsive to press items and tracts, would be in hundreds where now in tens, and the Society would grow and strengthen daily. For the land would be pervaded with its doctrines, and, as each soul evolved to the point of harmony with them, it would coalesce therewith, be another proof of their fitness for such need, and become a new centre for their further diffusion.

QUESTION CLXX.

We are told that there are seven keys to the mysteries of Natvre. How is the key of Numbers regarded in Occultism as related to its position among the seven—as one of the highest, or one of the lowest value? From articles written by Dr. Hartmann it appeared to be of great importance in his estimation, and I thought it of great value. Nevertheless it is considered by some as the lowest and most material of the keys.

J. K.—It is not possible to say with authority how "Occultism" would regard this or that subject, because we have not the final word of the *great* Occultists upon any one point. But these

would not improbably say, and have implied, that no one department of universal nature is to be looked upon as more important than another. There are no hard-and-fast distinctions in Occultism. Take Prana, for example; it pervades all the other principles, just as "fire" is everywhere throughout the universe. The importance of Numbers lies more in their proportional relation to one another than in the Numbers themselves. We may see this illustrated on the physical plane in the following manner. As is well known, the food and gastric juices unite in the formation of protoplasm, which builds up the physical body. But let an alteration in the chemical relation of the constituents of the blood-stream take place. This change of chemical relation is a change in vibratory relation, or a change in the numerical proportions, or various rates of vibration, of those constituents. As a result, instead of the formation of life-sustaining protoplasm, we have developed in the system the poisons known as leucomaines. Some writers are better fitted by nature to understand some one key which then appears to them as more important than others are, but the sage knows that every key is necessary and each must be turned seven times, *e.g.*, on seven planes. These planes correspond for each key.

QUESTION CLXXI.

Is it necessary for a good Theosophist to accept implicitly the phenomena narrated in Sinnett's "Occult World" and elsewhere? May a man be an earnest believer in the truths of the Wisdom-Religion, and yet reject the validity of the testimony on which the evidence for phenomena rests? Or is it incumbent upon a member of the Society to receive the phenomena with the philosophy, in much the same manner as good Christians are expected to swallow the miracles related in the Gospels?

Ans.—To the first query, No; to the second, Yes; to the third, No. But such categorical replies need elaboration.

The word "Theosophist", like the word "Christian", has several degrees of intensity in meaning. A man may be a Theosophist in the sense that, on the whole, he thinks The-

osophy preferable to other systems; or in the sense that he firmly believes it a demonstrated truth; or in the sense that, however little or much he grasps its doctrine, its principle rules his thought, action, and aspiration. And a "good Theosophist", like a "good Christian", may be one who has either a rooted belief or a devoted spirit. And, further, as character is of more moment than conviction, a good Christian may be one who wholly rejects the creeds and name of Churches, while thoroughly manifesting the spirit and life of Christ; and, similarly, a good Theosophist may not be an F. T. S., while wholesouledly consecrated to altruistic work and internal purification.

But in neither of these senses can the epithet "good Theosophist" be conditioned on belief in phenomena. Want of belief may be due to either of two causes;—the individual may not find the evidence satisfactory to a trained judgment, or his judgment may be without training, and consequently without fitness to estimate the evidence. The latter must be the case with the majority of good Theosophists, just as it is with the majority of any other group of good people, since trained judgments are necessarily the possession of but a minority anywhere. Hence a lack of intellectual skill cannot exclude a man from membership in that group. But even if he has the skill, his honest conclusions may be different from those of others, like Mr. Sinnett, with equal skill, for all thinkers of like grade do not reach like results. And a man may have the most copious conviction of Karma, Reïncarnation, and many another truth, though not satisfied that phenomena are equally demonstrable. Still less can the epithet be denied to the Theosophist in principle merely. For if a man unselfishly serves the race and resolutely elevates his own nature, good Theosophy is ruling his life, and is not cancelled by indifference to phenomena.

Take another point of view. No authority exists to pick out one specific doctrine in the Theosophical *repertoire* and use it as a touch-stone to determine orthodoxy. Whence could anybody get either the power or the right to make the selection and then apply it? It cannot be done as to the great matters of Divine Being or Evolutionary Law or Karmic Rule; much less as to a minor matter like thaumaturgy. Certainly, then, the

status of one who is an earnest believer in the truths of the Wisdom-Religion cannot be impugned because he does not see fit to include among them what is asserted about phenomena.

It cannot even be said that it is incumbent upon a member of the Society to receive the philosophy, far less the philosophy *plus* the phenomena. Members are pledged only to the doctrine of Universal Brotherhood, and beyond that think exactly as they choose. They are strongly encouraged to think somehow, to use their reason and their intuition, not at all to passively accept what is given them and gulp it down without examination. Infants thus receive nutrition, and so do very old people in dotage, but adults of sound mind feed otherwise. When their spiritual nurses treat as wholesome pabulum what Lecky calls the "speaking ass and the possessed pigs", they are apt—at least in these days—to "pass". Even if they do not always reason aright, they get the reasoning faculty into action, and partial movement is better than paralysis. Nothing more than the doctrine of Fraternity can be exacted of F. T. S., but, once within the Society, the stimulus to thought is so great that they soon begin to take modest excursions and give hope of more prolonged flights. When they can sustain themselves very far, they usually find that any philosophy other than the Theosophic is overpassed.

Correct as the FORUM believes the above answers to the Question, there is something which ought to be said for the phenomena. Evidential value of testimony as to them is exactly as it is to anything else; in other words, an unusual occurrence in any region needs to be substantiated by competent witnesses. But if there are witnesses and they are competent, why not accept their testimony? Mr. Sinnett has recorded some phenomena and the evidence of them, as well as stated very cogent considerations thereon. One should note, however, that since his record not a few other phenomena have occurred, some within the knowledge of present-day writers. Precipitated letters are a case in point, and of these Mrs. Besant is an explicit witness, as are also some other eminent Theosophists not so far off. It is not necessary that one should receive such a letter oneself in order to appreciate the proof of its

genuineness. Now the value of this phenomenon, as of others, is two-fold,—it vindicates the assertion that subtile forces and the control of them are facts, and it shows that Those who thus wield them are actively behind the T. S. If a man rejects the testimony, he uses what is unquestionably a right which no one can gainsay, yet he may lose what gives much confidence in the genuineness and the future of the mission the Society, thus watched over, is effecting. There is great encouragement in the certainty that unseen Beings who know incomparably more than any of us feeble workers are following our efforts and, when necessary, assisting them. Perhaps a "good" Theosophist might be even better if he had this additional conviction that his beliefs and his works are not without a background very solid and very forceful.

QUESTION CLXXII.

Are we Western people ready for the doctrine that "meditation is better than action"? Must we not work out our action-impelling qualities where we are now?

Ans.—To the first query, No; to the second, Yes.

The notion that people all over the earth are to turn their eyes to India, to get their cue from there, and to square all their opinions and habits to the type in Hindustan, is one of the most amazing which cosmopolitan Theosophists encounter. It is entirely possible to value and adopt the good points of any native without servile imitation of it throughout. One may honor the manliness and justice of the English, and yet abstain from copying their insular narrowness or the distressing garb of their women. French ingenuity and thrift may be appropriated while the natural childishness and factiousness are laughed at. One can appreciate the depth and subtlety of the German mind, yet scrupulously avoid the German manners. American enterprise and good humor may be dear to many who detest Fourth of July-ism and the doctrine that a male organism of twenty-one years' growth is the only needed outfit for voting and running for office. And, similarly, it is practicable to revere the spiritual attainments of the Hindus without also

revering their fondness for allegory and legend, their undiscriminating reception of whatever comes down from ancestors, and their placid belief in superstitions which a sense of humor, if possesed, would disperse. It is no more wise to accept the dictum that "meditation is better than action" than to accept the exemplification of it given in retiring into the jungles at a certain age and living on nuts and trash.

We Western people have seen the wisdom of that sentence in Holy Writ: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might". Reforms don't come about through pondering upon them, but by getting to work at them. Thought is very important, and the mind, like the body, gains accuracy only as it is trained; but the mind works through the body, and if we are to accomplish anything it will be as we bestir ourselves and give vigorous aid to all the forces operating for our own and the general good. This earth is the sphere for action—and plenty of it: we shall have ample time for reflection in Devachan. The Higher Powers, who placed us here, are wiser even than Hindus, and we shall not go far wrong by compliance with their purposes.

QUESTION CLXXIII.

Is it possible that our lower nature is composed of groups of elementary beings (sub-human) which under the higher tutelage can be welded into a force for good, rather than a something evil that has to be cast off? If so, ought not the Higher Ego to be considered a trainer and teacher of the Lower Manas rather than as a foe, even as a parent restrains his children from wrong-doing, and would not this view make the conflict between the animal and spiritual nature easier to most people?

Ans.—It is very doubtful whether most people would be disposed to take this view of the constitution of our lower nature. They would say that there is no reason to suppose that either our physical desires or our baser emotions are formed of other beings of any grade. We experience hunger, thirst, and lust because of certain needs arising in bodily processes; we experience envy, hatred, jealousy because of ill-ordered and undis-

ciplined feelings. Both classes are abundantly accounted for by obvious causes, and it is a maxim of scientific thought that we are not to search for fanciful or remote agencies when the ground is amply covered by those that are palpable.

The supposition that our lower nature is composed of sub-human beings introduces needless complexity into the problem, and might very well increase that tendency to materialism which we see (extremes meeting) in advanced Scientists and advanced Occultists. For by enlarging the number and intensifying the influence of the unspiritual elements in man, it ties him still more closely to earth and makes him more than ever the outcome of earthy agencies. Moreover, it distracts his attention from *self*-control and fixes attention on control of these imaginary beings. Perhaps it is hardly correct to say that the lower nature is to be "cast off". It is to be ruled, mastered, subjugated, made a useful tool, not thrown away. For even the baser passions—envy, hatred, etc.—are often but perversions of impulses which in their proper sphere and for right ends are just, and the original impulse in such cases needs purification and proper direction rather than uprooting. Nor is the Higher Ego a foe to the Lower Manas unless the latter is rebellious, and then the training and teaching justly imputed by the Questioner to the former have merely to become sterner.

W. Q. J.—The editor is right in saying the lower nature cannot be cast off, but must be subjugated We might as well say we can annihilate universal mind as to say we can "cast off" anything that is a part of nature and going to make us what we are. The lower nature must be discovered in all its ramifications and carefully subdued, as thus it is transformed and not cast off. But I cannot agree with him in respect to "sub-human elementals" composing us and which he calls "fanciful". They are not fanciful, even though the questioner views them in the wrong light and the editor in no light at all. If there is any point strongly made in occultism it is that we are a compound of lives, that every part of us is so made, and hence it follows that our lower nature is made of these lives. There is no vacuum in the universe void of a life. But while this is so,

these lives, in so far as they go to make up man, are not to be considered as separate beings from himself whom he can "educate", as inferred in the question, from a position as man which is apart from them. They exist in him, and as he lives and thinks so he impresses on them his thoughts and acts, and as they are leaving him every moment of time it follows that a stream of these lives of many grades and sorts is continually being projected from him into space and forming his own karma. For they are unintelligent and only act in their own way, just as water acts when it runs down hill. If we regard them as beings that we are educating we will fall into superstition, but if, on the other hand, we say they do not exist and have no place in us, as the editor infers, we will never come to right knowledge of the universe as it is.

They are matter, in fact, and a certain quantity of it comes into the charge, so to say, of every man, and every one is therefore responsible for the impressions he gives to the atoms that make him up, and if he does not live aright he will have to suffer the consequences sooner or later. For these very elementals are the means whereby karma operates, for without them—considering atoms as points of sensitiveness—there would be a break and no way for karma to have effect. If they do not exist, then there is no way to make the connection between matter and mind and thought and circumstance.

The conflict between the higher and the lower can be made easy only by the old rule "to look on all parts of the universe as containing spiritual beings, the same in kind and only differing from each other in degree."

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